

# SENECA'S PROPHECY

AND ITS FULFILMENT.

A MEMORIAL OF A.D. 1897 AND THE FOUR HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST SIGHTING OF THE NORTH-EAST COAST OF NORTH AMERICA, BY JOHN AND SEBASTIAN CABOT, MERCHANT ADVENTURERS OF THE CITY OF BRISTOL, SAILING UNDER A COMMISSION FROM KING HENRY VII. OF ENGLAND.

BY THE  
REV. DR. SCADDING.

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TORONTO :  
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1897.



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## SENECA'S PROPHECY

### AND ITS FULFILMENT.

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HAVING chanced to acquire many years ago, while yet a lad at school, a copy of Washington Irving's "Life of Columbus," I became fascinated with a certain brief Latin quotation which appeared on its title page, as a kind of motto, implying an evident prophecy of the new world of America, delivered sometime in the first half of the first Christian century, by the Latin philosopher and poet, Lucius Annæus Seneca.

Adopting, in the case of one word, a reading for which there is good authority and which for a reason given in a foot-note would seem to be the true one,\* the prophecy on the title page of Irving's Columbus may be rendered into English with a little expansion as follows:—"Late in time eras will arrive when Oceanus himself may undo the bands which confine human enterprises, and a vast land may be laid open to the general view, and Tethys, spouse of Oceanus and mother by him of countless Oceanids, guardians of islands in the sea, may disclose new spheres, and Thule may no more be styled earth's utmost limit."

I could not at the time of the reception of this prize grasp the full import of the Latin motto referred to, but I saw enough of its force to become greatly interested in the contained prediction, and in the writer who had recorded it. To such an extent was this carried that among the modest ornaments of my chamber when a student at college figured a small bust of the philosopher and poet, obtained from an Italian trader in such articles, albeit, that the Graces had by no means been favourable to Seneca's general aspect, which harmonized not badly with one's idea of a tutor of the tyrant Nero, and of a stoic of the strictest school. To the interest in Seneca thus early excited is due the present tribute to his memory, framed and put together in the midst of the new hemisphere which he so long ago was in vision permitted to behold.

The passage occurs in a chorus to be found in the second act of a drama entitled "The Medea." The speakers in the drama are supposed to be citizens of Corinth who are greatly excited by troubles brought upon them in connection with the history of this Medea. The old story of Jason's search after the

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\* The difference referred to is the employment of the name Tethys instead of that of Typhis. The former harmonizes better with the personified Oceanus, of whom Tethys was supposed to be the spouse, whilst the latter was the name of a pilot during a portion of the Argonautic expedition which at the time of the supposed utterance of our prophecy was already a past event.

Golden Fleece is interwoven with the matter, and the enthusiasm that had been created in favour of the discovery of new regions by land and sea is loudly condemned. Various instances are given of confusions and enmities that had already arisen from a free intercourse among barbarous nations, but worse things were to be expected. The prophecy already described was then formally pronounced by the chorus.

" Venient annis  
 Secula seris, quibus Oceanus  
 Vincula rerum laxet, et ingens  
 Pateat tellus, Tethysisque novos  
 Detegat orbis, nec sit terris  
 Ultima Thule."\*

The *Medea* of Seneca was evidently constructed after the model of the *Medea* of Euripides, but we do not observe in the latter drama a prophecy of a like purport to that which is so remarkable in the former drama, although the denonement of both tragedies turns upon the conduct of *Medea*, her cruelty to her own offspring, her vengeance upon her enemies, and her own final escape into the region of space by means of her magic power as an enchantress.

The tragedies of Seneca were translated at an early period into English, and they were imitated in their plot and arrangement by a class of playwrights who were styled from this circumstance the Senecan school. Among these writers were Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, and Norton, and other contrivers of the pageants displayed before Queen Elizabeth on her visits to the Inns of Court and elsewhere, and the influence of these productions on some of the plays of Shakespeare has been traced.

Polonius' account of the accomplished actors in *Hamlet* will be remembered where he says that "Seneca cannot be too heavy" for them, "nor *Plautus* too light."

The ancient mind was full of vague traditions in regard to the impious audacity of those who dared to penetrate by word or deed the mysteries beyond the sphere in which they had been born. Horace himself, we shall remember, refers to these ancient speculations, when he says :—

In oak or triple brass his breast was mail'd,  
 Who first committed to the ruthless deep  
 His fragile skiff, nor inly shrank and quail'd  
 To hear the headlong *Afric* fiercely sweep,  
 With northern blasts to wrestle and to rave ;  
 Nor fear'd to face the tristful *Hyades*,  
 And *Notus*, tyrant of the *Adrian* wave,  
 That lifts, or calms at will, the restless seas.

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\* Washington Irving in the first edition of his "Life of Columbus" gave *Typhis* instead of *Tethys*, but the latter is the reading in later issues of the work. I have preferred *Tethys* as harmonizing better with *Oceanus* personified, while *Typhis* simply recalls the Pilot of the *Argo* in an expedition which already at the time of the prophecy seems to have been a past event.

What form of death could daunt his soul who view'd  
 Ocean's drear shapes, nor turned his eyes away,  
 Its surging waves, and with disaster strew'd  
 Thy fated rocks, Acroceraunia?  
 Vainly hath Jove in wisdom land from land  
 By seas dissever'd wild and tempest-toss'd,  
 If vessels bound, despite his high command,  
 O'er waters purpos'd never to be cross'd.

The general impression in regard to the great Western Ocean, prior to the time of Columbus, may also be given in the graphic words of an early Arabic writer on the subject, Xerif al Edrize, quoted in the Introduction to Washington Irving's Columbus.

"The ocean encircles the ultimate bounds of the inhabited earth, and all beyond it is unknown. No one has been able to verify anything concerning it, on account of its difficult, and perilous navigation, its great obscurity, its profound depth and frequent tempests; through fear of its mighty fishes, and its haughty winds; yet there are many islands in it, some peopled, others uninhabited. There is no mariner who dares to enter its deep waters; as if any have done so they have merely kept along its coasts, fearful of departing from them. The waves of this ocean, although they roll as high as mountains, yet maintain themselves without breaking; for if they broke, it would be impossible for ships to plough them." Lord Bacon, in his Essay Of Prophecies, quotes the passage from Seneca which we are making the text of our discourse, and it was here in all probability that Irving made a note of its existence, but the same quotation, wanting the last two lines, is to be seen on the engraved title page of an old Italian gazetteer of America, published at Leghorn in 1763 by Marco Cottellini.

Bacon pours a degree of contempt upon a number of prophecies which from time to time had currency among the multitude, and among these he includes the verse from Seneca, recalling the numerous "demonstrations that the globe of the earth had great parts beyond the Atlantic, which might be probably conceived not to be all sea."

Bacon also speaks of Plato's speculations on this subject, in the dialogues entitled "Timæus and Critias," the latter being styled by him *Atlanticius*, as containing the story of the lost Island of Atlantis, which made such a strong impression on the minds of early explorers.

This submerged continent was supposed to have attained a high state of civilization, the influence of which had been felt on the continents of Europe and Africa, and had extended even to Asia, affecting Athens, and Greece generally. Through the straits afterwards known as the "Pillars of Hercules" the commerce from the lost continent passed into the Mediterranean. Plato gives as his authority for such ideas, documents obtained by Solon from certain priests in Egypt; but he speaks in such a way of these communications as to give the reader to understand that he himself considered them rather apocryphal. Jowett, in his introduction to the *Critias* (p. 685), expresses the opinion that "Plato in the Island of Atlantis is simply describing

a sort of Babylonian or Egyptian city, to which he opposes the frugal life of the true Hellenic citizen." Bacon's well-known new Atlantis is based upon the same traditions. In this treatise, as Sir Walter Raleigh informs us, Bacon designed to exhibit a model or description of a college, instituted for the interpreting of nature, and the marvellous works for the benefit of man under the name of "Solomon's House, or the Knowledge of the Six Days' Works," and the innuendo is that England at large would profit greatly by adopting many of its supposed customs; and truth to say, not a few of them have actually been incorporated in English thought and usage since the days of Bacon. From the same source have sprung other works on ideal republics or states. As for example Sir Thomas More's "Utopia," Campanella's "City of the Sun," Hall's "Mundus Alter et Idem," also in more recent times, "The Speculations of Ignatius Donnelly" and "Colonel Le Plongeon."

At all events, whether by accident or otherwise, the prophecy put by Seneca into the mouths of the chorus in his *Medea* has been amply fulfilled. To adopt the language of mythology, Father Oceanus has loosened the chain with which he himself had confined the human view, and the vast predicted continent has come into sight across the western waves, and Tethys, his spouse, has revealed her countless Oceanids, her islands, in all directions, well fitted for the habitation of man. Thule has long since ceased to be the extreme limit of human operations, wherever that Thule may have been, whether in the far Scandinavian North, the Hebrides or Iceland, or farther south among the Canaries or the Azores.\*

Our English "Land's End" and "Cape Finisterre" of Spain were earlier indications of limits to human enterprise in a westerly direction. *Plus ultra* is now, however, the inscription on the Pillars of Hercules.

We ourselves on this continent are in the act of celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of the unveiling of the land which is now our home; with what keen interest would Seneca have regarded the fact, could he have learned that his own native Corduba would in after ages be intimately associated with the name of the principal agent in the great discoveries which he had been permitted to predict. All readers of Irving's *Columbus* will remember how frequently the name of Cordova, which is the ancient Corduba, occurs in the accounts of the great discoverer's early interviews with Ferdinand and Isabella.† What Seneca says by anticipation in one of his letters in regard to the whole earth is quite applicable to our special case on this continent.

"If a man had given thee a few acres of land," he remarks to a correspondent, "thou wouldst say that thou hadst received a benefit at his hands; and deniest thou that the immeasurable extent of the whole earth is no

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\* Black, in his "Princess of Thule," makes it Lewis in the Hebrides; the origin of all these references to conspicuous terminal objects on the earth's surface is probably to be sought for in the scripture expression "the ends of the earth," so familiar to us all.

† When Ben Jonson, in his celebrated lines to the memory of Shakespeare, prefixed to the folio edition of 1623, speaks of "Æschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Pæcevius, Accius, him of Cortova, dead" — the reference in the last expression is, of course, to Seneca, who was born at Cordova B.C. 3.



benefit? If a man should give thee money and fill thy coffer, for that seemeth a great thing in thy sight, thou wouldst term it benefit, and thinkest thou no favour that God hath hidden so many metals in the earth, spread so many rivers on the sands, which flowing discover ingots of massy gold, silver, brass, iron, which he hath hidden everywhere; that he hath given thee means and knowledge to find it out by setting marks of his covert riches upon the surface of the earth?" This laudable recognition of the providential intentions of God in regard to man which is ever observable in Seneca was so acceptable to the early writers of the Christian church that several of them circulated the idea that Seneca was at heart a Christian,\* and after the fashion of the day the notion came at last to be embodied in a series of apocryphal letters which were supposed to have passed between the philosopher and the Apostle Paul; but although it cannot be made to appear that any communications ever took place between Seneca and St. Paul;—and it would seem that the philosopher was quite unaware of the "Dayspring from on High" which in his time had visited the sons of men, inviting them to the study of Divine Truth and empowering them to live in accordance therewith,—nevertheless so great was the light vouchsafed to Seneca as a moral thinker and reasoner, that his writings acquired everywhere a peculiar authority. They were carefully translated into various languages, and the name of Seneca became far and wide a household word. And occasionally it happened that a father even caused his son to be baptized by the name of Seneca.† I have before me now Thomas Morrell's translation of the "Epistles of Seneca," in two volumes, quarto, printed in London by W. Woodfall, in the year 1786; Sir Roger L'Estrange's "Morals of Seneca," translated by him during the days of Charles II.; also Lodge's translation of the "Works of Seneca," a folio volume printed by Wm. Stansby, London, 1614, with engraved title page, showing below, the figures of Zeno, Chrysippus, Socrates and Cato; and above, Seneca taking poison in the Bath, as recorded by Tacitus.

#### COROLLARY.

I desire to subjoin by way of corollary, as it were, to this discourse on Lucius Annaeus Seneca and his famous prophecy, a theory to explain the curious fact that the word, Seneca, came to be extensively used as a designation for an important sub-division of our native Indians here in America. We have all heard of the Seneca Indians, and the name continues to be a familiar expression amongst us. It may have happened in this wise. We all know

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\* Here are two extracts from Seneca with a Pauline ring about them, quoted by Dean Farrar, along with many others, in his "Seekers after God" (p. 174), "God is near you, is with you, is within you," says Seneca in a letter to his friend Luceilius. "A sacred spirit dwells within us, the observer and guardian of all our evil and our good, there is no good man without God" (p. 73), and again, "Do you wonder that man goes to the Gods? God comes to men. Nay, what is yet nearer, He comes into men. No good mind is wholly without God."

† In the early days of Toronto, when still styled York, Mr. Seneca Ketchum was a well-known citizen, remarkable for support given to all philanthropic objects. He was brother of a more distinguished character, Mr. Jesse Ketchum, some of whose benefactions survive, and are still acceptable boons in the Public schools of the city.

that native Indian names and words are represented in print in a variety of ways, arising from the circumstance that they were parts of a language unwritten previous to the arrival of the white man. In the index to O'Callaghan's "Documentary History of the State of New York," the word Seneca is given in the following twelve different forms: Seneca, Ciniques, Senekees, Senekas, Sennicks, Senocks, Senicas, Sinnakes, Sinnequaas, Sinnokes, Snickes, Syniks.

All this is sufficiently bewildering, but the ordinary mind under such circumstances instinctively catches at a sound which seems to convey some meaning in it, and this it proceeds to treasure up and convert to its own use, however wrong the interpretation may be. Let it be remembered that Lucius Annaeus Seneca was popularly held to be a philosopher of the Stoic school, whilst it was a matter of general observation that the red Indian was wont on emergencies to exhibit many Stoical characteristics.

Hence on some trying occasion when a certain member of one of the Six Nations thus distinguished himself, he may have been humorously described as a veritable Seneca, or a true disciple of Seneca, as being in fact a Seneca Indian, meaning thereby a Seneca kind of Indian, and hence the term by degrees came to be the popular designation for a whole sub-division of the Iroquois race. The term would do to mark Campbell's

"Stoic of the woods, the man without a tear,"

somewhat on the "non-Anglus sed-Angelus" principle. Stoic itself, we may remember, tempted Shakespeare to play upon the word in his "Taming of the Shrew," "Let's be no Stoics nor no stocks, I pray; nor so devote to Aristotle's Ethics as Ovid be an outcast quite abjured."

The usage among English speaking people of not disfiguring Roman proper names when incorporating them into their language, as the French are apt to do when adopting Latin names, as in the case of Tite Live for Titus Livius, Tacite for Tacitus, would lend itself to the custom.

According to their practice the French have transformed the Roman proper name Seneca into Sénèque, but on glancing at the twelve varieties above given of the tribal Indian name, a Frenchman would have no particular difficulty in selecting one which sounded like Sénèque, and thus among both French and English the idea of Stoicism as connected with an Indian brave would remain the same, though expressed by words slightly different. I have already in a brief essay entitled "Mohawk and Seneca set right" discussed, by the aid of Gov. Pownall, the fact that the real name of the sub-division of Six Nations commonly called Senecas was not "Senecas" but Sonontouons, as also the fact that the appellative "Mohawk" was not the tribal appellative, but Canienga.

"Seneca as an epithet still continues to be familiar amongst us, not only as applied to a sub-division of our own Indians on the Grand river, and to a well-known lake in the State of New York, but also as a popular designation of certain native wild plants, as for example, Seneca snake-root and Seneca grass or vanilla, both mentioned by Asa Gray in his manual.

## SENECA BOOKS ;

### THE LOG SHANTY BOOK-SHELF COLLECTION

FOR 1897.

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The Seneca books here enumerated come within the scope of our Log Shanty Book-shelf series, by virtue of the fact that the collection not only began to be made in the old pioneer days, but that it was actually started within the walls of one of the primitive homes or homesteads hewn out of the original primeval forest. The writer while yet a lad at school was so fortunate as to receive as a prize a copy of Washington Irving's well-known "Life of Columbus," in four octavo volumes, on the title of each of which conspicuously figured the prophecy from Seneca, which has formed the text of the accompanying discourse. The volumes thus obtained were carefully deposited with others in the old home, and the interest excited in the boyish mind by the quotation from Seneca, here first seen, was enduring, and led to the addition from time to time of works cognate to the subject. It will be remembered that each of the groups which have been shown in the Pioneers' Lodge during the Toronto annual Industrial Exhibition originated in a somewhat similar way.

Irving's "Life of Columbus," 4 vols. London: John Murray, 1828.

An old volume in the Spanish language, containing a fine autograph of Washington Irving as that of a former possessor. (Mislaïd.)

Lodge's translation of "Seneca: Moral and Natural," folio; engraved title, 1614.

Sir Roger L'Estrange's translation of "The Morals of Seneca, with an Afterthought." New York: sixth American edition.

Aubrey Stewart's translation of "The Minor Dialogues of Seneca," etc. London: 1889.

"The Epistles of Lucius Annæus Seneca," with large annotations wherein, particularly, the tenets of the ancient philosophers are contrasted with the Divine precepts of the Gospel with regard to the moral duties of mankind. By Thomas Morrell, D.D. London: W. Woodfall, Dorset street, Salisbury square, 1786; 2 vols., quarto.

Copy of Morrell's "Greek Lexicon," quarto, with Hogarth's portrait, engraved by Basire.

Veterum Illustrium Philosophorum Pætarum Rhetorum et Oratorum Imagines Ex Vetustis Nummis, Gemmis, Hermis, Marmoribus, aliisque Antiquis Monumentis desumptæ. A. Io: Petro Bellorio,

Christina: Regina: Augustæ Bibliothecario. Romæ, Apud Io: Iacobum de Rubeis, ad Templum S. Mariæ de Pace, 1685. Folio, with fine head of Seneca from an antique bust.

L. Annæi Seneca, Philosophi opera omnia. Leipsic: 1832; 5 vols.

L. Annæi Seneca, Tragediæ cum Notis Farnabii, Amsterdam ex officina Janssonia-Waesbergiana, 1678. (Engraved title page.)

L. Annæi Senecæ, Tragediæ ad optimorum librorum fidem accurate editæ, Lipsiæ: Carolus Tanchnitius, 1835.

L. Annæi Senecæ et aliorum tragediæ serio emendatæ, cum Josephi Scaligeri, nunc primum ex autographo auctoris editis, Danielis Heinsii animadversionibus notis. Lugduni: Batavorum ex Typographio Henrici ab Hæsteus, etc., 1611.

L. Annæi Senecæ, Sententiæ cum notis Gruteri. Lugduni: Batavorum, 1708. Elaborately engraved frontispiece, including small medallion of Seneca.

Walter Clode's Selections from the "Morals of Seneca." London: 1888.

"Ideal Commonwealths," Plutarch's "Lycurgus," More's "Utopia," Bacon's "New Atlantis," Campanella's "City of the Sun," and Hall's "Mundus Alter et Idem." London: Geo. Routledge & Sons, 1890.

Harrington's "Oceana." Under the title Oceana here given to an ideal republic about the middle of the 17th century, Harrington describes the British Islands as they might be, according to his judgment.

A similar lesson was sought to be impressed by a work which appeared in the year 1820, bearing the following title :

NEW BRITAIN.

A

NARRATIVE OF A JOURNEY

BY MR. ELLIS,

TO A

COUNTRY SO CALLED BY ITS INHABITANTS,

DISCOVERED IN

THE VAST PLAIN OF THE MISSOURI,

IN

NORTH AMERICA,

AND INHABITED BY

A PEOPLE OF BRITISH ORIGIN,

WHO LIVE UNDER AN EQUITABLE SYSTEM OF SOCIETY, PRODUCTIVE

OF PECULIAR INDEPENDENCE AND HAPPINESS.

ALSO, SOME ACCOUNT OF

THEIR CONSTITUTION, LAWS, INSTITUTIONS, CUSTOMS AND PHILOSOPHICAL OPINIONS :

TOGETHER WITH

A BRIEF SKETCH OF THEIR HISTORY

FROM THE TIME OF

THEIR DEPARTURE FROM GREAT BRITAIN.

"Through the distorting glass of Prejudice  
 "All nature seems awry; and but its own  
 "Wide-warp'd creations straight: but Reason's eye  
 "Beholds in every line of nature—truth,  
 "Immortal truth: and sees a God in all."

—*New British Poem.*

LONDON :

PRINTED FOR W. SIMPKIN AND R. MARSHALL,  
 STATIONERS' COURT, LUDGATE STREET.

1820.

Fowler's Bacon (treating of him as a philosopher standing between old and new systems). London : 1881.

Plato's Republic, with the Dialogues entitled "Timæus and Critias" in English.

The Contemplations of Joseph Hall, Bishop of Norwich (often styled "the Christian Seneca") with memoir by James Hamilton, M. B. S. London : T. Tegg, 1839 (fine portrait).

The Works of Joseph Hall, Bishop of Exeter. London : printed by M. Fletcher for N. Butler, 1628. Folio pp. over 1,400. Fine engraved portrait of Bishop Hall, and ornamental wood cut border round title page.

Farrar's "Seekers after God." London, 1886. Representative extracts from Seneca, Epicuretus and Marcus Aurelius.

William Black's "Princess of Thule." Printed at New York : Geo. Munroe.

A mezzotint of Sir David Wilkie's painting of "Columbus propounding the theory of the New World," showing the figures of Juan Perez, Garcia Fernandez, Alonzo Pinzon, Columbus and his young son Diego.

P.S.—The translation from Horace given at p. 4 is Sir Theodore Martin's version. "Acrocerania," which occurs therein, is curiously almost identical in meaning with "Thunder Cape" in our Canadian Lake Superior. It is worthy of note that the Promontory in our Canadian Lake Huron, known as "Cabot's Head," bore that name prior to 1797, as may be seen by a reference to the first published official Gazetteer of this portion of Canada.

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